

# Introduction

In January 1998, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) convened a group of in-house experts in landscape maintenance, horticulture, and urban forestry to develop best management practices (BMPs) for landscape maintenance operations. This project was undertaken at the request of the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation as part of the City of Seattle's Environmental Management Program. Newly revised in 2005, this document consists of nine chapters and provides insights, guidance, regulatory information, applicable policies, and management practices for landscapes within City of Seattle's park system.

In this manual, BMPs are defined as a clear and consistent set of directions to SPR staff for the management and maintenance of landscaped and natural parkland, and the individual assets contained within those areas. Resource areas identified within Seattle parks include landscaped, horticultural, and urban forest landscape types. SPR, through its staff, is charged with responsibility as primary steward of these vast and valuable resources.

SPR manages nearly 7,000 acres of City property. Approximately 2,300 acres are developed with amenities such as athletic fields, special gardens, play areas, lawns, and ornamental plant beds. The remaining acreage (approx. 4,700 acres) is natural areas that when combined with the developed parks comprise an urban forest with over 1.2 million trees. City parklands also include about 760 acres of urban watershed with more than 8 miles of streams capable of supporting salmon and trout. SPR responsibility also extends to more than 24 miles of freshwater and saltwater shoreline. Each of these resource areas can be viewed as individual urban ecosystem containing multiple assets such as trees, wildlife, ornamental plant beds, and turf. All these ecosystems require deliberate and thoughtful stewardship.

As the largest landowner in the City, Seattle Parks and Recreation has the opportunity to be a leader in promoting sound environmental practices for managing its landscapes. It is critical that SPR carries out this stewardship in a consistent manner regardless of geographic or jurisdictional boundary. As greater numbers of citizens and community organizations partner with SPR in restoration and maintenance activities, the need for the consistent application of management practices has never been more important. In addition, this manual will help elected officials and community groups better understand the complexities of resource maintenance.

# About This Manual

This manual establishes clear guidelines for design and maintenance practices for Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation's landscape, horticulture, and urban forestry operations. The manual is structured in the following way:

- BMPs: Best Management Practices for each management or resource area are presented in nine chapters.

Each chapter of this BMP manual contains the following information:

- Definition of Resource: Basic information about the resource or operation.
- Goal Statement: Clear SPR goals for each resource.
- Definitions: Key terms are explained.
- Policies and Guidelines: Applicable policies, regulations, and other official guidelines pertinent for each resource.

Sections for support and maintenance operations categories also contain the following information:

- General Maintenance Practices: These are BMPs for what would typically be called routine maintenance such as mowing or edging turf. In the Natural Areas BMP, these also include BMPs for specific assets, such as Beaches.
- IPM: Specific resource applications and programs for pest management, if applicable
- Training: Training programs appropriate to each resource.
- Appendices: Pertinent City of Seattle references in hard copy and as online references. It includes Standards and Specifications lists and other key resources and documents.

The wording of this manual has been carefully selected. "Shall and will" have been selected to indicate those activities that are performed as management practice. The verb "should" prescribes practices the Department should be performing to adequately care for the resources base. However, not all the practices prescribed can be performed—or performed all the time—given budget constraints. It is important that this manual be clear in this area. At the same time, it is hoped this document will help delineate over time those critical maintenance operations that should receive greater funding consideration.

# Acronyms

**DPD – Department of Planning and Development**  
**DSG – District Senior Gardener**  
**EAA – City of Seattle Mayor’s Environmental Action Agenda**  
**ECA – Environmentally Critical Areas**  
**EMP – City of Seattle Environmental Management Program**  
**FOC – Friends of the Volunteer Park Conservatory**  
**GEMLINK – Greenhouse Environmental Software designed by Q-Com**  
**gpm – Gallons per Minute**  
**GPS – Global Positioning System**  
**HPA – Hydraulic Project Approval (permit obtained through WSDFW)**  
**HWC – Hazardous Waste Coordinator**  
**IPA – Interpretative Program Areas**  
**IPM – Integrated Pest Management**  
**MSDS – Material Safety Data Sheet**  
**NMF – Neighborhood Matching Fund**  
**OSE – City of Seattle’s Office of Sustainability and Environmental**  
**PDD – City of Seattle Planning and Development Division**  
**PFP – Seattle Parks and Recreation Department’s Pesticide Free Parks Program**  
**PPE – Personal Protective Equipment**  
**ppt – Parts per Thousand**  
**RCC – Resource Conservation Coordinator**  
**SII - Sustainable Infrastructure Initiative (component of EAA)**  
**SMC – Seattle Municipal Code**  
**SOP – Standard Operating Procedures**  
**SPR – Seattle Parks and Recreation Department**  
**SPU – Seattle Public Utilities Department**  
**SUF – Senior Urban Forester**  
**RCW – Revised Code of Washington**  
**USDA – WS – United States Department of Agriculture – Wildlife Services**  
**VMP – Vegetation Management Plan**  
**VPA – Vegetation Protection Area**  
**WSCP – City of Seattle’s “Water Shortage Contingency Plan”**  
**WDFW – Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife**  
**WSDA – Washington State Department of Agriculture**